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STRENGTHENING OF THE COORDINATION OF HUMANITARIAN EMERGENCY ASSISTANCE OF THE UNITED NATIONS

SECURITY COUNCIL
Forty-eighth year

Letter dated 17 December 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Secretary-General

I have the honour to transmit, enclosed herewith, the letter that I today sent to the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia.

I should be grateful if you would have the present letter and its annex circulated as an official document of the General Assembly, under agenda item 44, and of the Security Council.

(Signed) Dragomir DJOKIĆ
Ambassador
Chargé d'affaires a.i.

ANNEX

Letter dated 17 December 1993 from the Chargé d'affaires a.i. of the Permanent Mission of Yugoslavia to the United Nations addressed to the Chairman of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia

Upon instructions of my Government, I am writing to you regarding the decision of the Security Council Committee established pursuant to resolution 724 (1991) concerning Yugoslavia in connection with the request for the export of natural gas for humanitarian purposes to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia is appalled that, due to the incomprehensible and inhumane policy of certain members of the Committee, the request of the Russian Federation for the export of natural gas to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia exclusively for the heating of hospitals, kindergartens, schools, homes and other institutions of a humanitarian character, was actually rejected at the Committee's latest meeting, held on 9 December 1993. The effects of this malevolent decision will have tragic consequences, particularly for the innocent - children, the frail and the elderly in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia.

The position of the United States, the United Kingdom and France that they would be prepared to consider favourably the export to the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia of only limited quantities of heating fuel for certain institutions, whose particular needs are verified by relevant humanitarian agencies, is unfortunately nothing more than an attempt to justify their absolutely unacceptable and irrational position in order to quell a possible outrage by international humanitarian organizations and the media, had this humanitarian request been outrightly rejected.

The decision to consider authorizing only strictly limited quantities of fuel will result in the continuing collective punishment of the civilian population in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia whose lives are directly jeopardized due to the lack of natural gas and fuel for heating during the harsh winter months. Taking into account the very slow and painstaking procedure that is envisaged by such a mechanism, it is evident that urgently needed fuel for humanitarian purposes cannot possibly reach on time those in need. In a situation where the greatest number of hospitals, schools, kindergartens and dwellings in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia are left with virtually no heating, it is morally and practically unacceptable that the Government of the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia should face the ultimate choice of which institutions are to be supplied and which sacrificed.

By refusing to allow the import of gas for humanitarian purposes, the countries in question have decided to ignore the appeals of United Nations humanitarian agencies in the field, and particularly the assessments of Mrs. Ogata, the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees, Dr. Nakajima, Director-General of WHO, Mr. Jan Eliasson, Under-Secretary-General for

Humanitarian Affairs, and the Co-Chairman of the Conference on the former Yugoslavia.

By their stubborn and incomprehensible position, the United States, the United Kingdom and France have acted against the letter and spirit of the Security Council resolutions on sanctions, in which humanitarian products are exempted from the sanctions regime. Moreover, they have abused the consensus principle by which the Committee reaches its decisions and defied the will of the members of the Sanctions Committee, who felt that the pressing humanitarian situation in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia needed an urgent positive decision.

For well over a year, despite repeated appeals and thoroughly documented and extensively explicated requests for urgent humanitarian imports of gas and oil for heating purposes, the Governments of those three countries have constantly asked for further information and data only to expose finally that all those demands were part of a delaying tactic.

As eloquently put in the statement of the Permanent Representative of the Russian Federation to the United Nations, which was made available to the public, "the sanctions should not cause additional unacceptable suffering to the civilian population and especially its most vulnerable segments. The sanctions cannot and should not serve as an instrument which indiscriminately punishes innocents and affects thereby the prestige of the United Nations and its humanistic ideals and traditions".

By their decision, the United States, the United Kingdom and France have indeed exactly decided to punish the innocent not only by keeping the temperature at pipe-freezing levels in humanitarian institutions, educational facilities and homes during the harsh winter months, but have also denied the necessary raw material for food-processing and the pharmaceutical industry, which will inevitably lead to grave shortages of foodstuffs and medicaments well into next year.

The notion put forward by the United States in the Committee, that Belgrade should feel the suffering of Sarajevo, is outrageous as it uncovers the main aim of the sanctions, which is evidently not to stop the civil war, but to punish innocent civilians for events over which they have no control.

The question arises - who gave the right to those countries and under what principle of international or humanitarian law can anyone exercise such punishment of an entire nation?

Those who have decided to continue to deny the most basic human rights of innocent civilians in the Federal Republic of Yugoslavia under the pretext of defending human rights elsewhere, will have to bear the great responsibility for the human suffering and loss of life that will most certainly ensue as a result of their decision. Aware of the efforts that Your Excellency has invested in

attempting to facilitate a positive decision on the import of fuels for humanitarian purposes and of the sympathetic attitude of many members of the Committee, we call upon you to bring this issue to the attention of the Security Council so that it may be reconsidered.